

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**TRANSFORMATION AND THE MAKING OF A PENT-ATHLETE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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For thirty years, Army officers and noncommissioned officers focused their training, education, and leader development on large-scale maneuver warfare against the Soviet Union in the fields of Europe. In response to today's "Long War," Army leaders are now looking to develop leaders who can adapt to the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The Army calls these leaders "pent-athletes." This paper looks at the historical development of pent-athletes, the requirements to develop a pent-athlete, and the steps the Army should take to institutionalize their development across the force.



## TRANSFORMATION AND THE MAKING OF A PENT-ATHLETE

Transformation is a journey. It is not a destination. And transformation is not synonymous with modernization. It is not only done in the material dimension of the process. It involves doctrine. It involves organization. It involves training. It involves the way we develop our leaders.<sup>1</sup>

- General Peter J. Schoomaker,  
Chief of Staff of the Army

The Army is in the midst of a tremendous transformation effort while simultaneously conducting combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in support of the nation's Global War on Terror. With Iran's quest for nuclear power, North Korea's missile threat, South America's drug cartels, and Africa's regional instability significant potential exists for future military involvement across the full spectrum of operations. This volatile and uncertain environment, along with diminishing resources, challenge Army leaders at all levels with meeting the Chief of Staff's transformation vision; however, challenging environments are not new to Army leaders.

In the early 1970s, the Vietnam War and the move to an all volunteer force caused tremendous turbulence in the Army. Senior leaders at the time, products of World War II, knew that drastic measures were needed to reform the Army out of its looming crisis. In response, Army Chief of Staff (CSA) General Creighton Abrams established the Astarita study group to define the Army's role in the strategic environment for the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The study group "advocated a shift to a deterrence and readiness mission in Europe."<sup>2</sup> The study complemented Richard M. Nixon's change to the national security strategy away from "peripheral tasks and regions" to the continent of Europe as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization became "the undisputed core of U.S. foreign policy aimed at the containment of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, and its defense the central role for U.S. troops."<sup>3</sup>

Given the new Nixon Doctrine, the Army disregarded the lessons of Vietnam and focused on maneuver warfare in the German countryside. This change in focus allowed the Army to move the complex requirements of low-intensity conflict seen in Vietnam to the bottom of the Army's doctrine and training priority list. General William E. DePuy, the architect and first commander of Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), believed the Army was ill-suited to fight wars like Vietnam and particularly "ill suited for the purpose of 'securing' operations where they must be in close contact with the people."<sup>4</sup> DePuy focused energy to train a force to win in Europe and his doctrine of Active Defense "reorient[ed] the school system so that it had a larger training as opposed to educational aspect to it."<sup>5</sup>

Today's national security strategy has moved the focus away from Europe and currently has the Army operating globally "in close contact" with the people of Iraq, Afghanistan, and many other countries. The "Long War" is now a key part of the strategy and described in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) as one "against terrorist networks...and includes many operations characterized by irregular warfare."<sup>6</sup> Unlike General DePuy, the senior leaders of today must transform an Army with a strategy that moved from a single-focused threat to one of multiple complex challenges including non-state enemies. Harry Summers, speaking at a Naval Postgraduate School conference on developing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Warriors, stated that an unclear future "has enormous ramifications, because you can train for a known enemy...but you can only educate for an unknown enemy."<sup>7</sup> The challenge for today's Army leaders is to transform a force that has served the nation so very well in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to a force more capable of dealing with the likely and very different threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Upon assuming the position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), General Peter Pace, USMC, told his staff that if the services "do not change a single tool at our disposal, but simply change how we employ those tools, we will make significant progress in transformation."<sup>8</sup> Today the Army is transforming by developing new material such as the Future Combat Systems, new organizational structure such as the modular Brigade Combat Teams, and new doctrine such as Field Manual 3-93 (Draft), *The Army in Theater Operations*. However, despite the efforts in new material, organization, and doctrine, the Army's Transformation Roadmap states that "[r]egardless of concepts, capabilities and technologies, it is important to remember that at the center of every joint system are the men and women who selflessly serve the nation. Although the tools of warfare change, the dynamics of the human dimension remain the driving force in all military operations."<sup>9</sup>

A critical dynamic of this human dimension is leadership. The task of developing leaders with the right skills and attributes for the complex and ambiguous 21<sup>st</sup> Century "is a daunting requirement in many ways. One expert suggested it is like trying to prepare someone now for the Olympic Games in 10 or 20 years when you do not know what the events will be."<sup>10</sup> Secretary of the Army Francis Harvey and General Schoomaker have stated on numerous occasions that the Army needs leaders who can adapt to the challenges of today and tomorrow – what they both call the "multi-skilled pent-athletes."<sup>11</sup> The purpose of this paper is not to pass judgment on whether the pent-athlete is the right leader for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Army, but to identify what actions the Army should take to train, educate and develop pent-athletes for the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments the Army will find itself operating in for decades to come.

### The Pent-athlete

In the 1970s, Army leaders studied the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the “lessons it drew were not abstract conceptual points concerned with the evolving nature of war but provided a very clear model of what the Army needed to do to fight in Europe.”<sup>12</sup> General DuPuy rebuilt the Army through performance-oriented training in conventional tactics at the small unit level. This rebuilding effort produced “how to” manuals, the soldier’s manual, the skill qualifications test, the Army Training and Evaluation Program, and eventually the National Training Center.<sup>13</sup> This focus on conventional warfare served the Army well through the 1980s and is credited with providing the foundation for the Army’s success in Operation Desert Storm (ODS) in 1991.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union and ODS, the Army was without a peer competitor. Contingency deployments to countries like Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo dominated the 1990s. Army leaders, products of the DePuy years, tried to keep the focus on conventional warfare. CSA General Dennis Reimer stated that “we can do other things. We can do peacekeeping and all these other tasks, but never at the expense of our primary mission.”<sup>14</sup> General Henry H. Shelton, former CJCS, also stated that “professional soldiers, trained for combat operations, clearly provide the best type of manpower for peace operations.”<sup>15</sup>

These statements by Generals Reimer and Shelton reflect the Army’s struggle with trying to remain focused on conventional warfighting competencies while the Army found itself doing everything but conventional operations. Many Army leaders agreed that junior leaders needed a strong grasp of tactics, technology, and leadership, however, they also knew the difficulties leaders were facing in this new operating environment and studies from the decade of the 1990s strived to capture the reasons for these challenges.

In 1999, General Eric Shinseki reflected on his experience as a commander in Bosnia and stated “it’s the most difficult leadership experience I have ever had. Nothing quite prepares you for this.”<sup>16</sup> Due to these ambiguous and uncertain environments, General Shinseki ordered the formation of a panel to study officer training and leader development. This panel released their results in 2001 and found that the Army needed to develop leaders with the enduring competencies of self-awareness and adaptability.<sup>17</sup> Lieutenant General William Steele, the director of the panel, later wrote that leaders must have skills and attributes that help them “become aware of the need for new skills...know how to develop those new skills...transfer that learning and associated competencies to other leaders...[and] institutionalize learning in the Army’s culture...to increase self-awareness and adaptability.”<sup>18</sup>

In 2003, an Army War College report described six “metacompetencies” needed by leaders of the Objective Force. These six “metacompetencies” are: identity, mental agility,

cross-cultural savvy, interpersonal maturity, world-class warrior, and professional astuteness. The authors believed this clear focus would help direct leader development efforts in the Army.<sup>19</sup>

Given these aforementioned and complementary studies, their own experiences, and a close look at leader successes and failures in Operations NOBLE EAGLE, ENDURING FREEDOM, and IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), the senior leadership of the Army determined that:

gone are the days when the Army could focus training only on major combat operations. Today the Army must train Soldiers and units to fight insurgents and other irregular threats while executing multiple operations worldwide. The complexities of the strategic environment demand a balanced training focus. Leaders...must ...expect the unexpected...be adaptable and flexible...be able to accomplish missions throughout the range of military operations.<sup>20</sup>

This statement was a clear signal that the Army was looking for a new type of leader capable of operating across the full spectrum of operations. The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report recognized “Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) as a U.S. government wide mission of increasing importance and identifies military support to SSTR as a core mission.”<sup>21</sup> In a complementary effort, the leadership of the Army finalized their concept for the pent-athlete. A pent-athlete at the brigade and below level possesses five key skills: a competent full spectrum warfighter; a creative thinker; a skilled leader in governance, statesmanship, and diplomacy; a general awareness of cultures with a focus on a particular area of the world; and a builder of leaders and teams. This pent-athlete also possesses five key attributes: decisive, with integrity and character; rapid, informed decision-maker amidst uncertainty and confusion; empathetic; dedicated to life-long learning; and an effective communicator (see Figure 1).<sup>22</sup>

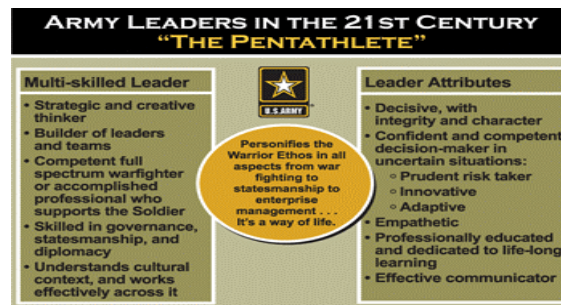


FIGURE 1: THE PENTATHLETE



### Developing the Pent-athlete

Programs in developing leaders have had varied success over the past few decades in both business and the military. It is estimated that almost \$50 billion was invested in leader education and development in the year 2000<sup>23</sup> and the United States Army rivals any corporation in efforts to find a successful leader development methodology. The work of the three Army Training and Leader Development Panels is an example of such commitment by the Army. However, despite dedicating significant money, time, and expertise, many organizations fail to achieve the desired results in their development programs.

Douglas Ready and Jay Conger's research on leader development found that many organizations fail in their development programs because of two pathologies they call "productization" and "ownership is power." The authors describe the first pathology as a lure of the latest fads hitting the bookstores or good ideas of the leaders prompting a continual readjusting of the programs. The second pathology is that organizations "find multiple power centers for leadership-development activities, each with a different owner but lacking any overall sense of coherence."<sup>24</sup> This constant state of flux leads to a cynicism in organizations about leader development programs in general and usually ends in the programs' subsequent collapse.

Armies throughout history have fallen victim to these same pathologies. Napoleon developed a list of 115 qualities of leadership and the common belief is he stopped before completing the list.<sup>25</sup> U.S. Army literature is full of knowledge, skills, and abilities of an Army leader. The Army's doctrinal leadership manual, FM 22-100, *Army Leadership*, has a cumulative list of forty-one competencies.<sup>26</sup> Due to this lack of focus, leader development programs across the Army are as varied as the leaders themselves.

According to Conger and Ready, the best way to avoid the first pathology of "productization" is to create a well researched set of competencies ascribed to by the leaders of the organization specific enough to provide focus, yet, general enough to stand the test of time. The Army created this set of competencies with their description of a pent-athlete.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, the Army has not published a like road map to avoid the second pathology in their leader development program.

Ready and Conger's pathology of "ownership is power" requires a clear delineation and coherence of responsibilities throughout the organization. Despite the CSA's call for pent-athletes, a few leaders in today's Army do not agree with the pent-athlete concept and if left to their own devices would develop leaders assigned to them in a very different direction. In Iraq, a

U.S. General did assert that it was unreasonable and impractical to expect front-line soldiers, given their training and pre-eminent warfighting role, to develop the levels of subtlety or master the wider range of skills predicated by the hearts and minds campaign. He implied that their employment must perforce be restricted to combat tasks, leaving post conflict engagement with the populace largely to other organizations, such as the Army's reservist dominated CIMIC units, and NGOs.<sup>28</sup>

This conventional warfare focused attitude, developed in many Army leaders throughout the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, will lead to what retired General Barry McCaffrey called "cognitive dissonance" where the leader's message (focus only on conventional operations) conflicts with the subordinate's expectations (development into a pent-athlete).<sup>29</sup> The Army completed the first challenge by clearly articulating the type leader they desire for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The next step is to set in motion the culture, actions, and programs to bring this type leader, the pent-athlete, to life.

#### The Requirements of a Pent-athlete

General Montgomery Meigs, when reflecting on his role as Commander, Stabilization Forces in Bosnia, said that he "got nothing [training or education]...for this mission. I visited a lot of folks, but the [A]rmy didn't sit me down and say, 'Listen, here is what you need to know.'"<sup>30</sup> This scenario is probably quite familiar to many company grade officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) in today's force. In response, the Army must clearly present the information NCOs and junior officers "need to know" for the situations expected in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. FM 1, *The Army*, states that it "is important that Soldiers have the training and experience to recognize what tactics and techniques might fit a particular situation. It is equally important that they have the imagination to recognize and initiative to adapt to new conditions and unforeseen events."<sup>31</sup> The five skills and five attributes of the pent-athlete provide the necessary framework for Army leaders.

A competent full spectrum warfighter demonstrates proficiency in doctrine, technology, and physical fitness. In the book *Embracing Uncertainty, the Essence of Leadership*, the authors found it critical for leaders in uncertain environments to find a "platform" defined as "a closely coupled bundle of notions, activities, or decisions that provides a foundation or springboard from which to act."<sup>32</sup> For junior leaders, Army doctrine is that platform. Pent-athletes require a clear understanding of how the Army trains, organizes, and fights and this is best met with the theoretical underpinnings of five doctrinal service manuals and how they apply at the brigade and below level: FM 7-0, *Training*; FM 3-94, *The Modular Force*; FM 3-93, *The Army in Theater Operations*; FM 3-07, *Stability Operations and Support Operations*; and FMI 3-07.22, *Counter-Insurgency Operations*. The theories behind these five manuals and associated tactics,

techniques, and procedures (TTPs) coming from battlefields and training centers arm the officers and NCOs with the knowledge to fight across the full spectrum of operations.

In addition to service doctrine, pent-athletes remain abreast with the fast pace of technology and modernization associated with transformation. Pent-athletes know the Army common user communication systems and how the systems enable information mediums such as Army Battle Command System (ABCS), Blue Force Tracking (BFT), and Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below (FBCB2). An example of the importance is found in the Third Infantry Division's after action report from Operation Iraqi Freedom: "FBCB2 as a command and control medium was extremely useful and effective. It provided unprecedented situational understanding for all commanders and command posts...limitations included a lack of training on all facets of the system."<sup>33</sup> In addition to the technological complexities of these systems, pent-athletes require knowledge of systems programmed to spiral into the force such as the Future Combat Systems.

Along with the common skills related above, pent-athletes are experts in the core warfighting competencies of their branch. In 1946, CSA General Dwight D. Eisenhower directed cost cutting across the service and in 1950 Congress passed the Army Reorganization Act which combined the coast and field artillery back into one branch – they had separated in 1907 due to their vastly different missions. The curriculum of the newly formed Artillery School deemphasized specialized training and all officers were instructed first as ground force officers and then artillerymen. Studies in the late 1950s and 1960s found that this integration and instruction failed to provide effective training for officers in both field artillery and the new air defense artillery and the "spawned mediocrity" again prompted separation in 1968.<sup>34</sup> As the service enters the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it cannot afford mediocrity in the core competencies of the branches

The Army, in response to ongoing operations, revamped the three major training centers to perform mission rehearsal exercises for Iraq and Afghanistan leaving many officers and NCOs training on missions completely unrelated to their branch. In a 2004 study, Dr. Leonard Wong found that most deployed officers were becoming better leaders, but officers in armor and artillery serving in Iraq "were not gaining proficiency in their branch."<sup>35</sup> The Army must provide a method for NCOs and officers to regain or maintain the required branch-specific proficiency in order for pent-athletes to operate at the high end of conflict, if called upon.

Most schools have incorporated a robust lessons learned section to capture the latest TTPs from on-going operations and training events. These TTPs complement the branch field manuals reflecting current doctrine. Full spectrum warriors require an in-depth knowledge of

how their branch fights today along with their associated technologies – not only weapon systems such as Abrams, Bradley, Multiple Launch Rocket System, and Patriot, but command and control systems such as Maneuver Control System, Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Display System, and the Air and Missile Defense Workstation.

The skills of the full spectrum warfighter are not just service related, but joint, interagency, and multinational (JIM) in nature and the CJCS and his senior enlisted advisor envision junior leaders receiving joint training and education earlier in their careers to ensure “future leaders will more effectively integrate tactical operations with interagency and multinational components.”<sup>36</sup> The Cheney Panel found a growing emphasis on joint-ness earlier in one’s career as both necessary and inevitable.<sup>37</sup> For joint operations, each branch has its own specific vital link. Full spectrum warriors at the brigade and below must focus their development on their branch’s specific links into the joint force. As General Meigs said, “Listen, here is what you need to know.” For artillery forces, it may be to understand how the Army’s Battlefield Coordination Detachment operates with the Air Force Air Operations Center (AOC). For air defense forces, it may be how units operate with the AOC through the Air Force Control and Reporting Center or Marine Tactical Air Operations Center. For armor and infantry forces, it may be how to operate with and adjacent to the Marine ground forces or how to link into the joint force air component through tactical air control parties for air-ground integration. The “need to know” lessons for brigade and below are the joint links and TTPs pertinent to the specific branch.

In addition to tactical and technical training from the Army and their branch, physical fitness training remains a key component of a developing full spectrum warfighter. Physical toughness establishes the underpinning of the Soldier’s Creed and the Warrior’s Ethos and full spectrum warriors must fully grasp their own level of toughness and how to instill similar toughness in the members of their unit. Methods to meet these demands include not only the FM 21-20 style standard physical training, but also warfighter PT, combatives, team contact sports, and obstacle courses.<sup>38</sup> All pent-athletes are physically fit and trained in the latest “expeditionary fitness” techniques.

The Army does well in developing the aforementioned skills in leaders; however, the skills of full spectrum warfighting only develop a leader part way to reaching the title of pent-athlete. There is significant education and experience that must augment this training. It is believed General Jimmy Doolittle once said, “If we should have to fight, we should prepare from the neck up.”<sup>39</sup> The Army must develop methods to more fully engage the cognitive aspect of the pent-athlete. British Brigadier General Nigel Aylwin-Foster, who served as the Deputy Commander

for training and organizing Iraq's Armed Forces in OIF reflected on his service alongside U.S. forces and concluded that the U.S. Army is:

conceptually and culturally ill-disposed to OIF Phase 4 [counterinsurgency and post conflict stabilization and reconstruction], and similarly ill-disposed to adapt to the extent required, and thus ironically ill-suited to the path determined for it de facto by U.S. Foreign Policy at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>40</sup>

After similar findings in the officer training and leader development panel, General Shinseki ordered a panel to look at the NCO program. This panel found that the NCO education system also "does not adequately teach the conceptual and interpersonal skills NCOs require to operate in full spectrum operations in today's contemporary operational environment."<sup>41</sup> Brig General Aylwin-Foster argues that the company and squad commanders "are the lynchpin in the de-centralized operations that tend to characterize" counterinsurgency, stabilization, and reconstruction.<sup>42</sup> Many who study today's political and military environment observed that "military personnel must be able to operate effectively and collegially in coalitions or multinational contingents. They must also acquire the ability to deal collegially with civilian populations and local and global media."<sup>43</sup>

According to this observation, success on future battlefields starts with the ability of leaders to recognize changes in the environment and determine what is new and what must be learned to be effective and that is the essence of intellectual agility and creativity. In today's world, there exist "79 low-intensity conflicts, 32 complex emergencies, and 18 ethnic wars, overlapping with 175 small-scale contingencies."<sup>44</sup> Some of these conflicts and emergencies possess potential to expand and become a U.S. national interest. Pent-athletes are capable of scanning and adjusting to the situation. They can detect trends, associations, and cause and effect relationships. To develop such leaders will take instruction in environmental scanning, systems thinking, critical thinking, and futures studies.

The pent-athlete of tomorrow must be skilled in governance, statesmanship, and diplomacy. According to Elliott Cohen the U.S. is in an environment where they are "policing the empire."<sup>45</sup> A junior officer serving in Iraq stated, "You are not just trying to learn one job, you are trying to learn several dozen jobs...everything from being a politician to being a war commander."<sup>46</sup> Pent-athletes understand the strategy for their theater of operation and how it ties back to the National Military Strategy and the National Security Strategy. To prepare leaders for this environment the Army must provide education in security affairs, history, international relations, and American politics.

There is strong evidence that despite "its own multi-cultural nature," the Army is not culturally attuned to the environments it operates in<sup>47</sup> and the insular Army bases abroad

become “mini-America” and great examples of the Army’s lack of emphasis on getting “culturally attuned.”<sup>48</sup> Pent-athletes develop a cultural awareness and agility that enables them to build and maintain relationships across boundaries. These pent-athletes have a willingness and ability to recognize, understand, and work effectively across cultural differences. These skills are developed through assignments overseas, regional studies, foreign language, religious education, international relations, and cultural studies.

To build teams for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century pent-athletes must also understand their own organizational culture and the cultures of the other services. Despite the great strides in “jointness” since the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, the differences in service culture remain great. Even greater is the cultural difference between the Army and other governmental organizations such as the State Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and non-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, and other humanitarian relief organizations. Pent-athletes understand the underlying assumptions of their own unit and the methods to determine the culture and agenda of a unit or organization they will serve alongside. They know how to shape and effect culture and work toward a common goal by building teams and leaders. Leaders gain these capabilities through studies in organizational behavior, organizational culture and leadership, leadership theory, managing culture, and fellowships or assignments with these organizations.

Effective organizational leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century demonstrate appropriate professional and personal values and ethics as part of decision-making and the warrior ethos. Soldiers “form a mental picture of how a role model acts in various situations, and then apply that image to the varied and novel situations they themselves encounter.”<sup>49</sup> Pent-athletes are these role models on tomorrow’s battlefields. The Army is finding that recent decentralized operations require “junior leaders to be warriors, peacekeepers, and nation-builders – simultaneously.”<sup>50</sup> These “varied and novel” situations require pent-athletes with an understanding of the role of the officer and the NCO in today’s society, the professional military ethic, and the Army values. Retired Lieutenant General Richard G. Trefry wrote that the Army is a profession akin to a religious order. It requires “dedication, belief in service, associations (personal and professional), integrity, loyalty, submission of self, and all the traits that humankind admires.”<sup>51</sup> Leaders develop these traits through courses in military history, ethics, philosophy, and the personal stories of soldiers returning from the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Pent-athletes must embrace uncertainty. An officer serving in Iraq said “You got to deal with a little girl who wants a chem-light and the very next minute [you] might have to shoot

somebody for trying to place an IED [improvised explosive device]...It is such a switch.”<sup>52</sup> Pent-athletes look for deeper patterns. They know that not only is the future uncertain, but new situations, complex systems, human behavior, and human knowledge are all inherently uncertain. They know that leaders are not always the primary provider of information or the source of all great ideas. They exert influence by shaping the interpretations of information and guiding discussion.<sup>53</sup> Leaders augment their experiences by taking courses in communications, systems thinking, conflict resolution, and rapid or adaptive decision-making.

The pent-athlete is an empathetic leader. The authors of *Primal Leadership, Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, argue that the fundamental task of a leader “is to prime good feelings in those they lead. That occurs when a leader creates resonance – a reservoir of positivity that frees the best in people.”<sup>54</sup> The four domains of emotional intelligence (EI) are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. These four domains are interrelated and “self-awareness facilitates both empathy and self-management, and these two in combination, allow effective relationship management. EI, then, builds up from a foundation of self-awareness.”<sup>55</sup> Pent-athletes build upon the Army’s self-awareness programs and the other three domains of emotional intelligence to demonstrate empathetic behaviors in their leadership.

Pent-athletes are life-long learners. Leaders tend to have a narrow view of themselves and “enhanced self-awareness created by feedback can help leaders know where to focus their developmental efforts and motivate them to better understand their strengths and improve their weaknesses.”<sup>56</sup> Retired LTG Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., wrote that the “most accurate judges of the leader – in the leadership role – are the people who are led by him or her.”<sup>57</sup> This type of motivation, prompted by subordinate feedback, is clearly present in a story told by retired Lieutenant General John W. Woodmansee about 360 degree surveys:

I recall vividly the experience of one of my subordinate generals in V Corps bringing me his evaluation and dropping it on my desk. I reminded him that this was his evaluation and that he did not have to show it to me. He confirmed that he wanted me to see it. The report was devastating to him. I recall a question in which 30 subordinates were asked, on a scale of 1-5, if they would emulate their leader’s personal and professional conduct. All 30 had responded with 1s, “absolutely not.” I asked him what he was going to do about it. He told me that he had called his subordinates and staff together and thanked them for their honesty, and indicated to them that he was going to change his behavior. He said that he had come to ask me to give him another survey in six months. The results of the second survey revealed dramatic improvement. The counseling the general got from those under him was far more effective in modifying his behavior than any he could have received from me.<sup>58</sup>

The clarity of strengths and shortcomings following constructive feedback such as a 360 degree survey allow a leader to focus their professional study and development. If coupled with a coach and an action plan, the results can be dramatic. A pent-athlete development program must include various instruments such as the 360 degree survey, psychological testing, after action reviews, and formal evaluations to provide a holistic picture of the leader and focus self-development.

A U.S. Army captain in Iraq, who sounds like he conducted his own informal after action review, relayed a story where he “was never given classes on how to sit down with a sheik [who] 2 days before I had seen his face on CNN, and now I am talking to this guy face-to-face.”<sup>69</sup> Business institutions have always emphasized communication skills, but over the past few years more and more professional schools are now offering courses in negotiation skills and universities are currently hiring full time faculty who specialize in negotiation.<sup>60</sup> Leaders with good negotiation and communication skills have effective reasoning and logic skills and they demonstrate empathy, compassion, and good listening skills. Pent-athletes understand the use of these skills in different cultures. These skills can be met with courses in counseling, cultural studies, communications, negotiations, and behavioral sciences.

This training and education will provide a foundation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Army pent-athlete. However, the training and education must continue in a coherent and consistent manner throughout the leader’s career. This career includes the operational, institutional, and self-development domains of the Army leader development program. To avoid the pathology of “ownership is power,” pent-athletes, just like world class athletes, require constant first rate training, education, and development. The Army must change their culture and many structures, systems, and policies to develop these world class leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### Recommendations

The Army experience in the Global War on Terror helped develop skills and attributes of a pent-athlete in its leaders. Sergeant James Russell with the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Iraq stated that the mission “is a lot less brute force (than the last time he was deployed to Iraq) and more hearts-and-minds now.”<sup>61</sup> Another 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division leader, Captain Klaudius Robinson, said that the “focus has definitely shifted” and he estimates “he spends half his time on ‘engagement’ with the population, perhaps a quarter working with Iraqi forces and ‘maybe 20 percent going after the bad guys.’”<sup>62</sup> In Tal Afar, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment has “melted into a once-hostile population center...[and] have become an essential part of the landscape here – their own tribe, in effect.”<sup>63</sup> This is a very different Army than General DePuy had in 1973 and the



Army must build upon this phenomenon of a large cohort of NCOs and officers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan that clearly see the need for the skills and attributes of a pent-athlete.

General DePuy changed the Army by disregarding the requirements of low intensity conflict and focusing on major war in Europe. Just like General DePuy changed the Army to meet the requirements of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, General Schoomaker's challenge is to change today's Army to meet the very different demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. General Pace assessed that the current "transformation is as much a mindset and culture as it is a technology or a platform."<sup>64</sup>

To accomplish this transformation, the CSA should lead an Army-wide coalition to embrace the pent-athlete construct he envisions and empower TRADOC with the authority and the resources to develop the programs to bring pent-athletes to life across the force. John Kotter said that individuals "alone, no matter how competent or charismatic, never have all the assets needed to overcome tradition and inertia except in very small organizations."<sup>65</sup> Given the size of the Army, General Schoomaker will need to create a "sufficiently powerful guiding coalition"<sup>66</sup> to push reforms. This coalition must include senior leaders from TRADOC, Forces Command, and Army Service Component Commands committed to the development of pent-athletes. Kotter cautions that:

[e]fforts that lack a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition can make apparent progress for a while. The organizational structure might be changed, or a reengineering effort might be launched. But sooner or later, countervailing forces undermine the initiatives. In the behind-the-scenes struggle between a single executive or a weak committee and tradition, short-term self-interest, and the like, the latter almost always win. They prevent structural change from producing needed behavior change. They kill reengineering in the form of passive resistance from employees and managers. They turn quality programs into sources of more bureaucracy instead of customer satisfaction.<sup>67</sup>

The "sufficiently powerful guiding coalition" must prevent countervailing forces from prevailing in undermining the development of pent-athletes. This effort starts with formalizing the pent-athlete into the lexicon of the force. When the Army published AR 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*, on 13 January 2006, the term "pent-athlete" was noticeably absent from the entire document.<sup>68</sup> A look at U.S. Army Europe's Command Training Guidance for 2005 – 2007 again illustrated no skill or attribute associated with a pent-athlete.<sup>69</sup> Reference to pent-athletes in these type documents followed by quarterly training briefs and conferences focusing on supporting programs will start institutionalizing the concept of the pent-athlete.

An informal way for the coalition to embed the pent-athlete into their formations is through story. The Department of Defense used this technique in the 2006 QDR to clarify the point that

the “indirect approach seeks to unbalance adversaries physically and psychologically, rather than attacking them where they are strongest or in a manner they expect to be attacked,” DoD referenced Colonel T.E. Lawrence<sup>70</sup>, the famed Lawrence of Arabia – the quintessential pent-athlete. Stephen Denning says a good story is like a “springboard...that enables listeners to visualize the transformation needed in their circumstances and then act on that realization.”<sup>71</sup>

The Army can start with a story of a well-known pent-athlete from last century and a not so well-known current example. General John J. Pershing taught at a “colored school” as a teen-ager and later commanded a Buffalo Soldier regiment in the Spanish-American War. He taught tactics at West Point and served as a military attaché in Japan. He commanded in the Philippines and later served as their military governor.

An example of today’s pent-athlete, Lieutenant Jordan Becker, graduated from Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. This airborne, ranger, infantry platoon leader with the 173<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade (Airborne) speaks French, Italian, and self-taught Arabic and Kurdish. LT Becker “made every effort to mix with and be part of Kurdish culture...[and] talked an entire Kurdish village into dislocating from their homes.”<sup>72</sup> These two pent-athletes are great examples to motivate and provide that springboard for leader development across the force.

To develop more Pershings and Beckers in the Army, the CSA should empower the commanding general of TRADOC to serve as the executive agent for leader development. TRADOC Commanding General William Wallace believes that victory starts at TRADOC. “It starts in our classrooms, it starts on our ranges, [and] it starts in our leader development programs. We’re talking about victory for the fight that is to happen tomorrow, and the one that is going to happen next Thursday, and the one that is going to happen 10 years from now.”<sup>73</sup>

To help this effort, the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommended significant change to TRADOC institutions. Currently planned large-scale moves include the Air Defense Artillery School from Fort Bliss, Texas to Fort Sill, Oklahoma to join with the Field Artillery School in forming a Fires Center of Excellence and the Armor School from Fort Knox, Kentucky to Fort Benning, Georgia to join with the Infantry School in forming a Maneuver Center of Excellence.<sup>74</sup> In his assumption of command speech on 13 October 2005, General Wallace charged the members of TRADOC to “seize the opportunities given to us by Base Realignment and Closure.”<sup>75</sup> TRADOC has a golden opportunity to focus pent-athlete development efforts in these two emerging combat arms centers of excellence.

To achieve excellence, TRADOC should partner with top-rate universities, other services and governmental agencies, experts in simulation, and pre-eminent health and fitness organizations to develop the programs. The curriculum should be built around case studies,

simulations, action learning, real world problems, experiential learning, and coaching. The programs should include residential and distributed learning and address real world issues to help transfer the learning.<sup>76</sup>

The programs should center on the Noncommissioned Officers Academy (NCOA), the Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC), and the Captain Career Course (CCC). The program should include a reflective practicum for junior leaders, in between courses, emphasizing coaching and learning by doing. This practicum concept allows the leaders to return to the operational Army and apply what they learn under the tutelage of a coach in the school house. TRADOC should design the NCO and officer programs to bestow bachelor and master degrees to the graduates, respectively.

While NCOA, BOLC II, and CCC would be branch immaterial, TRADOC should charge the commander at each center of excellence to design programs to meet the specific needs of their resident branches. Great work is being done to “explore commonalities and potential areas of synergies” between the future collocated branches and a great example is the counter-rocket, artillery, and mortar (C-RAM) system shared by air defense and field artillery.<sup>77</sup> C-RAM is one program of instruction that should exist at the Fires Center of Excellence level. In turn, the branch commandants at the centers should develop a complementary program of assignment oriented training and functional courses, to include the joint aspects for their branch, to meet the specific developmental need of their NCOs and officers to ensure branch competencies.

For this training and education to remain current with the fast pace of change in the contemporary operating environment, the staff and faculty at all levels would need constant feedback. Jack Welch, famed CEO of General Electric, wrote that “if the rate of change outside your organization is greater than the rate of change inside your organization, then the end is in sight.”<sup>78</sup> A recommended approach is an adaptive model of curriculum development. The proponents of this adaptive model suggest a “network by which the myriad institutions involved in professional military education can collaborate, exchange information, and share professional expertise.”<sup>79</sup> This network would not only include other Army and joint centers and schools, the Center for Army Lessons Learned, and the training centers, but unit commanders and senior NCOs along with the individual officers and NCOs in the program via their practicum. TRADOC needs to take advantage of existing information technologies to distribute knowledge throughout the organization and allow immediate changes to curriculum.

This redesign puts a tremendous demand on the staff and faculty. Current instructors in the branch schools can meet the needs of AOT and functional courses, but TRADOC would need to hire staff and faculty for NCOA and CCC to meet the redesigned curriculum. Martin van

Creveld in his book, *The Training of Officers*, wrote that the Army must expose leaders to top-notch faculty with the best minds available.<sup>80</sup> The Army should hire civilian faculty and assign field grade officers as instructors, not unlike Marshall, Bradley, and Stillwell at the Infantry School in the early 1930s.<sup>81</sup> The Army could enact a policy to allow these officers, if they desire, to remain instructors until mandatory retirement. This would provide a pool of seasoned instructors with expertise to draw from in times of crisis.

These programs will set a foundation for the continued development of pent-athletes; however, the Army must remember Ready and Conger's second pathology of "ownership is power." To avoid this pathology, General Wallace should appoint the branch commandants as the officer with primary responsibility for leader development. The commandants operate at the nexus of all activity for their branch and can strongly influence unit commanders, staff and faculty, Human Resource Command, and the developing pent-athletes.

The commandant's office can focus on individual pent-athletes and facilitate their development through all three leader development domains. Pent-athletes can benefit from coaching by a trusted advisor reflecting back behavior that the leader cannot see on his or her own. Unit commanders and command sergeant majors have traditionally served as the coach for these junior leaders, however, self-awareness is critical and there "is a basic conflict between a focus on accountability and a focus on learning. If rewards and punishments depend on an interviewee's answers, then the interview is not going to give insights that might foster learning."<sup>82</sup> Though commanders and sergeants major would still teach and coach the leaders of their organizations, this trusted advisor should be a faculty member at the branch school who can engage with the NCO or officer in a non-threatening way during their practicum.

The coach can reflect that mirror with many methods to provide self-awareness – 360 degree surveys, personality testing, evaluation reports, after action reviews, course work, practicum writings, and faculty assessments. These assessment tools on the individual pent-athlete need to be packaged into an individual portfolio that provides a detailed mosaic of the pent-athlete's learning as it develops over time.<sup>83</sup> This type assessment package provides a more holistic look at the leader and provides the commandant better insight into the leader's needs as they progress in their career.

The commandant and his or her staff can assess each pent-athlete and arrange assignment oriented training followed by an appropriate developmental assignment. Morgan McCall wrote that the "intellectual repartee of the classroom has a certain appeal, but when asked to recount events that changed them significantly, successful executives...described powerful, challenging experiences, the vast majority of which occurred anywhere but the

classroom.”<sup>84</sup> The strong ties between the institutional, operational, and self-development domain provided by the commandant and his staff will elevate development and bring to life the pent-athlete.

### Conclusion

For thirty years, Army officers and noncommissioned officers focused their training and education on large-scale maneuver warfare against the Soviet Union in the fields of Europe. The skills and attributes those leaders developed served their country very well. However, in response to the current “Long War,” Army leaders are now looking to develop leaders who can adapt to the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

To develop these leaders, the Army must become more agile and innovative in its leader development programs and the Army’s “ability to rapidly adapt [its] doctrine, organizations, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities (DOTMLPF) will be the measure of [its] institutional agility and clear proof of a culture of innovation.”<sup>85</sup> The authors of this statement entitled their article: *Adapt or Die*. The Army must adapt. A large cohort of NCOs and officers are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan ready to continue adapting. The Army and TRADOC must use this golden “opportunity” to set in place the environment to allow that adaptation to happen.

Warren Bennis said there “is nothing you can do about your early life now, except to understand it. You can, however, do everything about the rest of your life.”<sup>86</sup> The Army, if it demonstrates the “institutional agility,” can expect the rest of its life to include self-aware, adaptive leaders called “pent-athletes.”

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